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- ART. VIII. — 1. *On Emulation*. By the REV. J. EMERSON. — Annals of Education, Vol. II. p. 355.
2. DR. DWIGHT *on Emulation*. — Annals of Education, Vol. VI. p. 108.
3. *Emulation in Colleges*. By WARREN BURTON. — Annals of Education, Vol. V. p. 368.
4. PROFESSOR ROBINSON'S *Account of the German Universities*. — Biblical Repository, No. 1.

FEW objects are of more importance to a country, than the prosperity of its institutions of learning. And to no country does this remark apply with greater force than to our own. Here public opinion makes the law and the magistrate ; and hence whatever controls public opinion, controls every thing. It is for this reason, that our colleges and higher seminaries of learning are, we apprehend, more vitally connected with the public welfare than is ordinarily supposed. There is, probably, no period of equal extent in the life of the scholar, or the professional man, in which so much is done to store his mind with principles, form his character, and instruct him in the proper use of his mental powers, as the four years of his college course. Individual exceptions no doubt there are, but they are comparatively few. And in these few, the causes of failure to realize the legitimate results of a liberal education must, for the most part, be sought in the character of the pupil, not in that of the institution. The labors of the college manifestly lay broad and deep, in the youthful mind, the foundation for that professional eminence which is the fruit of riper years. The refined discriminations of criticism, the commanding eloquence of the forum and the desk, and the profound researches of philosophy, owe something, and, in truth, not a little, to the severe and perhaps irksome discipline of the recitation-room. The connexion is obviously most intimate between the successful accomplishment of a college education, and the successful discharge of those high and varied professional duties to which the student is shortly to be called. And hence the destiny of a great country, — a country, if judged by the increase of its population, its wealth, the extent of its resources, and the demand for every kind of professional service, without a parallel in the history of

the world, is really, in no small degree, dependent upon the condition of our higher seminaries of learning. And hence, too, there is reason, above what every one perceives, or is willing to admit, for cherishing them with peculiar solicitude. Any thing which can seriously affect their welfare is worthy of the most careful consideration. To watch over them with vigilance is the imperative duty of the public.

The friends of reformation, (without however setting aside the good old maxim of letting what is well alone,) we are not disposed to be offended with those, nor entirely to discourage their efforts, who have labored with commendable diligence to reform what they have been pleased to consider the errors, and sometimes the abuses, of our colleges; and to render them, as is pretended, more conducive to the *practical* business of life. It must be confessed, however, and is much to be regretted, that such labors have not always been conducted with very enlarged views, either of the objects of academical instruction or the best means of attaining them. The truth is, the public mind, from some cause or other, has been for several years in a morbid, restless, feverish state upon the subject of college education. At one moment, the current of opinion is strongly opposed to an extended study of the ancient classics; at another, the exact sciences become the subject of relentless proscription; at still another, the abstractions of metaphysics are vehemently assailed as a remnant of the scholastic jargon of the dark ages. Numberless, in turn, are the reasons for throwing all these out of the list of subjects, and for making education *practical*. These efforts of reform may imply a commendable zeal, but certainly not according to knowledge. They are no doubt well intended, and let this consideration be an apology for treating them with respect.

But it is not in the *subjects* of study alone that there is need of reform. The *motives* for studying have been subjected to a new analysis, and the result is that the *principle of emulation*, as it has been called, which, in all former times, has entered so largely into the business of study and of life, is no longer admissible as an incentive to diligence. It is encompassed with dangers, social, moral, and religious. It addresses itself to the worst passions and inflames them; and by the desolations which it spreads around, effectually destroys all the salutary fruits of knowledge. Its complicated and alarm-

ing evils have, from time to time, been held up to the public in various discourses and periodicals devoted to the interests of education. The special object of these labors seems to be the removal of all those honors, and those distinctions in scholarship, which have been conferred as the reward of merit, to the end that students may not be tempted to study from improper motives ; and may not subject themselves and the community to the evils, which are conceived to follow such a departure from the principles of right conduct.

We have not been inattentive to the progress of this reform. At first, we viewed it as a misdirected but harmless effort to eradicate a principle of action, which is interwoven with the very texture of the human mind, and which, of course, it is impossible to destroy. But the experience of a few years has shown, in this case, what has often been observed in others, that the attempt to accomplish what is impossible has been attended with serious evil. Sentiments unfavorable to distinctions in scholarship and to literary honors, having received the sanction of a few respectable names, have been warmly espoused by a certain portion of the students in several of our colleges. Instead of endeavouring, by a diligent application to the studies assigned them, to merit honors and distinctions, they have wasted, and worse than wasted their time, in meetings, discussions, resolves, and petitions intended to abolish them. And we fear that, in two or three instances, which have fallen under our notice, their efforts have been attended with more than merited success. And we fear, too, that in these cases, on the supposition that evils existed, the mode of redress is more to be deprecated than the evils complained of. Among the ancient Israelites, one of the tokens of their greatest degradation was that "children should be their princes." It is certainly, to say the least, not more auspicious to the interests of the public than becoming the modesty of youth, for those, who have not yet numbered half their *teens*, to band together in the character of reformers ; and to reform too a usage which has stood the test of time, and been approved by the wise and good for more generations than they have seen years. But in this there is nothing wonderful. Reform is the spirit of the age ; and often it demolishes the rampart which time and experience have thrown up for the protection of society, merely to show the levelling power. The truth is, in colleges as in other communities, there are and will be some malcontents ; and there, as else-

where, they are clamorous for change ; and there, too, as elsewhere, the clamor is apt to begin, not at the head, but with some less aspiring member of the body politic, and to proceed upwards with a vehemence somewhat proportioned to the distance between them. This we take to be the general fact. It would be unjust to maintain that there were no exceptions.

Now we would neither conceal, nor underrate the grievances of any portion of the community ; nor would we maintain that there is not sometimes in colleges, as elsewhere, just ground of complaint in respect both to the principles which are adopted, and the manner of carrying them into effect. But we do maintain that, in a community where the full benefit of enterprise and industry is offered to the acquisition of every competitor, there is a very special connexion between discontent and indolence ; between a dissatisfaction with distinctions and a consciousness of not deserving them. It is not indeed every one who professedly seeks, or would ostensibly be willing to accept of distinctions. Even he, whose “lowliness was young ambition’s ladder” “did thrice refuse the kingly crown ;” but it, alas ! was urged upon him. And there have been many others equally humble in their pretensions, who, fortunately for their consistency of character, have not been so sorely pressed with honors as was “the noble Cæsar.” The truth is, and vain is any attempt to disguise it, the love of approbation and the love of honorable distinction, or, perhaps, more properly speaking, the desire of those benefits which this distinction either implies or confers, are natural to man ; and he who labors to suppress or eradicate them will not be likely very soon to be out of employment.

But, however it may suit the convenience of some to join in the proscription of honors and distinctions as unnecessary, and as motives of action, unjustifiable ; and especially to urge their banishment from the halls of instruction ; others, entitled to the greatest respect, are sincerely of opinion that such incentives are wrong and dangerous, and that the best interests of education call for their discontinuance. The alleged consequences of these distinctions are the evils chiefly referred to in discussions upon “the principle of Emulation.” We propose to go somewhat more particularly into the examination of this question, with the hope of correcting some mis-

apprehensions on the subject, and of arresting the progress of an opinion, which, if we are rightly informed, has already introduced disaffection and disorder, with their attendant evils, into more than one of our respectable colleges. The subject presents three questions for consideration.

1. What is meant by the "principle of Emulation"; or in other words, what is really the principle in discussion?

2. Is this principle justifiable as a rule of action?

3. Is it expedient to resort to it, as an incentive to diligence in the discipline and government of colleges?

These questions, we suppose, embrace all which is materially concerned in its issue.

I. The principle of Emulation, so called, has been defined "*the desire of surpassing others.*" In defence of this as a principle of action, we have nothing to offer. Nor do we suppose that any one charged with the instruction of youth would be justified in urging upon his pupils the adoption of a principle, which had so little to recommend it. Nor do we believe that it is urged as a motive to exertion by any respectable teacher. If this be really what is meant by the principle of Emulation as applied to this subject, no one could treat it with less respect than ourselves. But this definition seems not to have been satisfactory. It has been amended thus; "*the desire of surpassing others for the sake of the pleasure of surpassing them.*" We are still less disposed to enter the lists in defence of Emulation understood in this sense. Nor is it the mere definition of a term that we are to discuss. We are to examine into the legitimacy of an important principle of action. And here we cannot but remark, that so far as our observation goes, all those, who have come before the public with views adverse to its use, have erred in their notions of the real principle in discussion. They have first called it *Emulation*, and have then resorted to the *jus et norma loquendi*, to fix the meaning of the term. We shall take the liberty of pursuing a different course. Without further troubling our readers or ourselves with a mere matter of nomenclature, we shall endeavour to ascertain the principle by examining the actual circumstances of the case.

From time immemorial, it has been the practice in almost all institutions of learning, in all countries, to confer some mark of distinction upon successful scholarship. Such a practice is as old at least as the time of Herodotus and the Olympic games;

and it has obtained in every succeeding age, in which scholarship has been held in the least estimation. As it respects our own colleges, this principle has been recognised and acted upon from the beginning. The conferring of literary degrees was originally intended to certify on the part of the recipient a large and *bonâ fide* proficiency in liberal studies. They do still guarantee a proficiency in literature and science not unworthy of respect, and we trust of great value. But it must be confessed, that they do not now imply all that the friends of a high order of scholarship could desire. If with us, as in Germany, degrees were restricted to those who pass the ordeal of an extended and rigid examination before men of tried abilities, it might obviate the necessity of any other stimulus to exertion. But the practice of conferring degrees on easy terms is of too long standing to be readily changed. With us, degrees are not distinctions. For the purpose, however, of encouraging diligence and rewarding merit, a system of honors and distinctions was long ago established by all our older institutions, and has with few exceptions been adopted by the younger, intended to mark the first, second, third, and, in some instances remoter grades of scholarship. In some few instances special prizes have been established, for the reward of excellence in some particular department; and, in most cases, Literary Societies exist, in which a selection of members, based upon scholarship, is made from each successive class. The hope and desire of these distinctions are, as is well known, with here and there an exception, powerful incentives to exertion.

Now let it be particularly observed, that no teacher so far as we know, ever holds up to his pupils the mere fact of *being distinguished*, or of attaining to a *superiority*, as a motive of action. Nor would we willingly think so poorly of any student capable of attaining eminence, as to suppose that he could be influenced by so narrow a view of the subject. So far as the institution is concerned, the honor or distinction is *intended to be strictly a reward of merit*. This is the true and only light in which it can be viewed. There is, so far as we are informed, no investigation into the motives of the student, nor would the motives, if known, at all alter the fact as to his diligence, good behaviour, or superior proficiency; and it is in consideration of these substantial realities, not the varying motives which have been instrumental in attaining them, that the honor is awarded. So far and no further is the

institution concerned. This arrangement is left to produce its natural effect upon the mind of the student. In what way it will operate upon each particular member of a college, it is impossible to determine. The presumption beforehand is that it would operate as a strong stimulant to exertion ; and from long observation, we are well assured of the fact, that it does so. If we descend to a more minute inquiry, as to the precise motive by which students are actuated in view of honors and distinctions, we think it will be found to be not the mere distinction, nor the mere attainment of an honor, but the important good which these either guarantee, or imply. That good may consist in personal advantages ; such for instance as the means of an easy and comfortable living, the acquisition of wealth and its attendant enjoyments, the pleasures of knowledge, of a cultivated intellect, and a refined taste ; — or it may consist in an increased ability to promote the welfare of others, and to advance the best interests of the human race. In the mind of the student, (we must of course be understood to speak of the thing generally,) the honors and distinctions are simply the means of attaining ends ulterior to themselves. By the principle of Emulation, then, so far as this question is concerned, must be meant *the desire of securing those benefits and advantages, which naturally belong to superiority in knowledge, virtue, and abilities.* This, if such we may call it, is the principle in discussion. As the student looks forward into life and contemplates the prospect before him, his first object is to *merit* and *secure*, on leaving his Alma Mater, an honorable distinction among his associates. This being done, he enters upon professional studies, or upon the more immediate business of life, with the advantage of a good preparation and a favorable introduction to the public. This we believe is the true statement of the case. So far as the principles of morality are concerned, it is precisely the same as being *actuated by the hope of reward.* It may be said that this reward implies distinction, that what one gains another must lose, and thus one is built up by the destruction of another. But it must be admitted that this does not alter the principle. Moreover, this distinction is only the distinction of merit, which is equally implied in all cases of reward whatever. The disadvantage which may incidentally, or even necessarily, accrue to others, is chargeable, not surely upon the successful competitor, but upon the nature of things. And it may be

that this kind of disadvantage forms an important part of the great disciplinary scheme of the present world, and is therefore a thing from which we may derive improvement, but against which all objections are vain. The hope, then, of a reward, of a substantial benefit, not that of an empty distinction or a worthless superiority, is the incentive to diligence in the case before us.

II. If these remarks are well founded, we fear that any extended discussion of the question, *whether this is a justifiable principle of action*, will be deemed a work of supererogation. We shall therefore be brief. But to prevent misapprehension, let it be distinctly borne in mind that we are not now endeavouring to determine what is the best possible motive of action, nor does our argument involve any comparison of the merit of different motives. The simple and only question is, whether the one proposed is justifiable.

1. It is sanctioned by revealed religion. The scripture commands us to love the Lord our God with all our hearts. This, beyond all doubt, is our first and highest duty. But is there no hope of a reward, that is, of a special good, resulting to ourselves, from keeping this command? The same authority which revealed the command, has assured us that obedience brings along with it the highest possible happiness of which we are capable; and what is more to the purpose, the very object of this assurance is, to urge us, by the consideration of our highest interest, to the performance of our duty. The quotation of particular passages of scripture in illustration of this fact, is unnecessary. It appears on almost every page of revelation.

2. This principle is sanctioned by the whole course of God's present moral government. Thus for instance, competence is the reward of industry and frugality in the common affairs of life, and the attainment of this competence is the chief incentive to the practice of these virtues. Approbation is the natural consequence and reward of generosity, kindness, and benevolence; and very few, we fancy, have attained to such an exalted pitch of virtue, such an entire devotion to abstract right and duty, as not to feel desirous of securing the approbation of the wise and good. Public confidence is the reward of faithful public service, and this confidence is a natural object of desire; and we cannot but think that, in all these cases, it was intended by the great framer of our

moral constitution, that these fixed and known consequences should operate upon us, as incentives to the performance of our duties. This principle is so palpable and so pervading, that further illustration is needless. Whoever wishes to see it developed with profound and masterly skill, may consult the first part of the *Analogy of Religion to Nature*.

3. As a third reason we may add, that this principle is inseparable from the present condition of human nature. The love of approbation is coeval with the dawn of intelligence. It is inherent in the constitution of the being, and can no more be removed or suppressed, than the desire of good. At mature age it is subjected to the control of reason and conscience as all other desires are ; but it still exists, and, under this control, plays a most important part in the changing scenes of life. Who needs be told that the hope of reward and the desire of future good, flow out with every pulsation of the youthful heart ? And who does not know, that the principles of action inherent in the youthful constitution, grow with its growth and strengthen with its strength, subject only to the modification of new conditions, and directed more wisely to the purposes, of life ? No doubt we may imagine a being never conscious of the love of approbation, never animated by the hope of reward, never quickened in his powers of action by the desire of ameliorating his condition. But such is not the human being, nor one fitted for the appointed sphere of human activity. Discard this class of motives, and what would be manifestly the result ? The hum of industry would soon die away ; the plough would stand still in the furrow, the reaper lie down in the field, the loom and the spindle would cease their motion, the stately ship would crumble in the dock, and the restless activity of business would give place to universal lethargy. Paralysis would seize on every branch and member of the social system. Man would be unfitted for the task most clearly assigned him in the present world.

From all these considerations we conclude, that *the hope of reward is justifiable as a principle of action*. The title to a reward is not rendered null and void by endeavouring to secure it, and the morality, which requires that it should be so, must proceed upon a principle nowhere recognised in the code of revelation.

III. We are prepared, then, to inquire in the third place, whether it is expedient to resort to this principle of action in

the discipline and government of colleges. The discussion under this branch of the subject must be somewhat extended. Several important considerations evince, in our opinion, the expediency of this course.

1. We remark, first, that from the peculiar circumstances of the case, there is *need* of some strong, some controlling incentive to diligence and good behaviour. Students in our colleges are, for the most part, of an age peculiarly critical as it respects the formation of habits. Youth is proverbially giddy, thoughtless, and rash; and no period of youth is more strongly marked by the outcropping of those qualities than that in which a college course is ordinarily begun. The spirits are then buoyant, the passions are predominant; the love of novelty, of change and adventure, are the prominent characteristics of this period of life. Upon the then new and fertile soil, every thing shoots forth with luxuriance, and very special care is necessary in order to check the growth of what is noxious and useless, and to cherish what is salutary and valuable. Add, moreover, that at the time of entering college, youth are just freed from the wholesome and needful restraints of parental authority. Notions of independence and self-control are but too apt to verge on the dangerous extreme. Men, aided by maturity of judgment and reason, and taught by large experience in the affairs of life, do not always turn liberty to the best account; much less is it to be expected of boys, when first left to act for themselves, and placed in circumstances which call for prudence and discretion. The transition from the paternal roof, where the eyes of an anxious father are seldom withdrawn from the object of his warmest affections and fondest hopes; and from the school-room, where the personal presence of the master frowns upon the idle, urges forward the loiterer, cheers the industrious, and rebukes the wayward; to the halls of the college, where personal superintendence is but occasional, where habits of self-government to a considerable extent are presupposed, and where the time of the pupil must be left in a great measure to his own disposal; — this transition we say is great, and to very many whose characters and principles of action are not previously formed, it is a transition fatal to industry, to virtue, to the fairest promises of untried youth. And hence is there need of some controlling principle of action placed in the hands of the teacher, which may operate as a safeguard in this period of danger.

2. We remark further, that as young men at this age *need* the influence of some strong incentive to diligence and good behaviour, so they are *peculiarly* susceptible of being influenced by the hope of reward and of honorable distinction. This arises from the very nature and circumstances of the case. Manhood looks around, before and after, with watchful care; old age looks backward and lingers upon the past; but youth looks forward, its gaze is fixed upon the future, it is naturally aspiring. The physical powers are then fast reaching perfection, the intellect is just beginning to repose with confidence on its own energies, the imagination paints the scenes of future achievement with all the vivid coloring of reality, and the passions, ardent and impetuous, prompt to deeds of deathless fame. Under these circumstances the love of approbation, the hope of reward, the desire of honorable distinction, will be found among the most powerful incentives to action which can be addressed to the young. And is it not justifiable, expedient, and wise, to seize the opportunity to turn them to good account? May we not conclude, with a good degree of confidence, that it was intended that we should avail ourselves of these natural and indestructible elements of the human mind, peculiarly prominent in youth, to shape and guide the course of that perilous age? For ourselves we cannot but think, that this peculiar fitness should vindicate the propriety of a practice, which seems to be founded in nature.

3. A third consideration, evincing the expediency of the measure in question, is the fact, that it serves materially to increase the influence of the teacher over his pupils. We here take it for granted that this is a desirable end, an important object; and we take it for granted, too, that teachers in colleges are generally such persons as, from their age, discretion, virtue, and intelligence, are fitted to exert, in every respect, a salutary influence over those committed to their care. It scarce need be remarked, that the business of government is at all times responsible, often difficult; but in no case is it more responsible, or more difficult, than in the government of colleges. Its responsibility arises from the momentous consequences which must follow successful or unsuccessful discipline. The youth, who constitute the inmates of the college, are destined shortly to figure in the various walks of professional life. They are to stand in the high places of the community. They are to become the accredited advisers of the great mass of the people, in matters touch-

ing their highest temporal and spiritual concerns. To them will the public look for example and precept. Their influence, often silent and unperceived and difficult to trace, will yet be widely diffused, nay, all-pervading. It will affect even the discipline and amusements of the nursery ; it will direct the order and instruction of the public schools ; it will speak to listening multitudes from the desk ; it will frame the law in the hall of legislation, and on the bench expound it and pronounce its sentence. The forms of social intercourse, the policy of trade, the maxims of morality, the supreme tribunal of republics, public opinion, will all feel its presence. Such, without exaggeration, is the character of that influence. How responsible is the business of forming the principles and moulding the character of those, who are destined to wield it ! He, who governs the college well, who, aside from the intellectual discipline actually imparted, makes it the school of wakeful industry, of sound morals, of amiable deportment, of generous purposes and laudable ambition, confers upon society one of the richest blessings, which fall within the competence of man to bestow. But this task is by no means easy. He who governs the college must contend with all the difficulties which lie in the way of parental government, without the natural means of the parent to overcome them. He stands, it is true, *in loco parentis*, but parental authority when thus transferred loses much of its peculiar efficacy. This efficacy in fact is not transferable. By the laws of nature, it is vested inalienably in the parent. In addition to this disadvantage of the derived authority, as the youthful community increases, is the necessity increased of stricter discipline and more effective means of control. The college officer is, indeed, armed with the authority of law ; but it is not the law of the civil magistrate, nor is it expected that it will be executed in the same manner and on the same principles. Personal influence after all is his most effectual means of preserving order, and of securing diligence and good behaviour on the part of his pupils. It is, therefore, a matter of sound policy to make that influence as commanding as possible. And in order to this, we must concentrate, as far as may be, in his hands, and place at his disposal, all those incentives to action, which are most powerful with the young.

4. We must advert to still another consideration, of too much importance to be overlooked in the decision of this

question. It is the relation which students sustain to the public as candidates for patronage. In this point of view, the propriety of college honors and distinctions, will appear, if we mistake not, in a strong light, whether we consider the rights of the student, or those of the public. Can any pretend that the student is not justly entitled to the distinction, which by diligence, good behaviour, and proficiency, he has fairly earned? Is there any thing which can more properly and justly be called his own, than his reputation as a scholar? Is there any thing more dear, or more valuable to him? Nay more, is there any thing, save a good conscience, which ought to be more valued? To many a young man, destined to be the ornament and pride of his country, the literary reputation which he brings from the seat of learning stands in the place of a patrimony. It is his inheritance, secured to him not by the laws of the land, but by the common consent of mankind. Take from him this reputation, and you leave him, in every sense of the word, poor indeed. Might we not with as much justice deprive him of his legal possessions in houses and lands, as deprive him of what is no less his, the reputation on which alone he relies for an introduction to honorable and useful employment? So far as the question of right is concerned, we confess that we can see no difference between the cases. The matter of fact is, that such a distinction actually exists; within the limited circle of academic intercourse, it is acknowledged, and cannot but be acknowledged so long as the sentiment of justice and the approval of merit remain inherent in the human breast. It will be said, perhaps, that this very fact completely obviates the necessity of the usage for which we are contending; that it renders any other distinction needless and uncalled for. It is certainly true, that under all ordinary circumstances merit will sooner or later find its own level. But why should obstacles be thrown in its way? Why should it be knowingly and voluntarily thrown in the back ground, and doomed repeatedly to struggle into notice, before it can realize the benefits to which it has long been entitled? We most frankly affirm that we know not by what principle of morals, or what obligation of conscience, or what maxim of a just and sound policy, we are called upon to withhold a public declaration of that distinction, which already exists in fact, and which, in point of justice, is as fairly due as the wages of labor.

But the community has some interest, and we think some

rights, in this matter. The services of educated men are a kind of public property, in constant demand. They, who by their public acts, and their liberality, have established and patronized our seminaries of learning, have certainly acquired some right to enjoy the fruit of them. And with respect to those, who have received the benefit of a liberal education, and present themselves as candidates for patronage, there is an undoubted right, on the part of the public, to inquire into their qualifications, to ask for testimonials, and to receive them. In this point of view, the awarding of a distinction, or the conferring of an honor, is no other than a testimony to the public respecting the character and qualifications of the recipient. So far as any principle worth the naming is concerned, what is the difference between a public honor and a private certificate signed by the officers of instruction? If the honor is not justifiable, or is inexpedient, the same must be true of the certificate. It may seem a little incongruous (possibly we may not be duly informed on the subject) that those who are most strenuously opposed to distinctions do not feel any embarrassment in asking for private letters of recommendation, nor any reluctance in accepting such as award to them their full measure of merit; nor have they, on such occasions, manifested the slightest misgivings on account of any injustice thereby done to others equally meritorious. We do not mention this in order to censure, but only to remark the incongruity, and show how difficult it is to avoid in practice a principle, which is founded in nature. It often becomes apparent, in the very measures which we are adopting to suppress it. If then, it is right and proper to give a private testimonial, we cannot discern wherein it is wrong to award a public honor. And if the community is entitled to require the former as a condition of public service, they are no less entitled to the convenience and benefit of the latter in respect to the same service.

Nor ought the rights of the institution itself to be entirely overlooked. It has a large interest at stake. Its prosperity depends very much upon its reputation, and this again depends very much upon the character and scholarship of those who have received the benefits of its instruction, and who will be understood, in the community at large, to represent its merits as a seat of liberal education. Now the institution has, we think, some right to say who

shall be its representatives, and how far, and in what respects they shall represent its claim to public patronage. This it might be expected to do, we grant, by the degrees which it confers. But the difficulty on this point, has already been the subject of remark. The usage of conferring degrees upon slight examinations, is of too long standing, and too general, to be easily changed. If they were restricted to those who have really merited well as scholars and men, they would answer all the purposes, or nearly all the purposes, of honors and distinctions. As things are, the security of the institution must be sought in the proper distribution of the latter.

So much for the expediency of continuing the use of literary honors and distinctions, as incentives to diligence and good behaviour, in our seminaries of learning. It is easy, however, to foresee that objections will be urged against our conclusion. We will endeavour to meet them fairly.

1. The most weighty objection which to our knowledge has been urged, is, that distinctions in scholarship hold up to the pupil an improper motive to exertion. This has been anticipated, and we hope satisfactorily answered, in treating the second general question proposed.

2. The next, in point of importance, which has fallen under our notice, is, that the system necessarily leads to strife, heart-burnings, and envy, among those who ought rather to be encouraged to pursue their studies in harmony and love. As to the matter of fact, this may sometimes be so, and is certainly much to be deplored. But whence comes the necessity of it? Is any one really obliged to be envious at the success of his associates? Is it so, that generous, high-minded youth, cannot witness the reward of merit without heart-burnings and animosities? We believe that a large majority of those who are candidates for distinction, would spurn the imputation as a libel upon their characters. We have known too many instances of uninterrupted friendship and intimacy between competitors for the first honors, to believe that the evil alleged is at all a necessary one. The truth is, these are passions which disfigure the fair features of human nature. They find no peculiar nutriment in literary distinctions. It is their nature

to be awakened and inflamed by all honors, and all distinctions, which are alien to the individual in whose bosom is fixed their own dark and gloomy abode. The wealth of the merchant, the popularity of the statesman, and the office of the magistrate, are as much the subjects of envy, to some portions of the community, as the literary distinctions of the scholar. If we are to condemn and remove every thing which can become the occasion of envy, the reform of the world is but just begun. It must proceed, till radicalism, and agrarianism, have reduced society, as far as the immutable differences in things will permit, to a dead and barren level. And even then, (which shows the folly of the project,) the evil would still exist; for distinctions are inevitable, and those of nature are often as invidious as those of society. When human skill has attained such compass and perfection, as to make every tree grow to the same size, and every blossom wear the same hue, then, and not till then, may all those distinctions be removed, which rankle in the bosom of envy. We might suggest another mode of correcting the evil, which would be quite as efficacious, and much more in harmony with those just principles of moral duty, which it becomes all men to honor. We would endeavour to eradicate the venom, not depopulate the earth to prevent its mischief.

3. Another objection deserving of some notice is, that equal justice cannot be extended to all; that conferring distinctions upon some will operate to the injury of others. This, it is said, will arise in part, from the extreme difficulty, perhaps impossibility, of determining the exact claims of different candidates, and in part, from the difficulty of fixing upon a system of distinctions exactly to meet them. As to the former, we readily admit the difficulty alleged. But what is the inference? that injustice must follow a decision? We grant that it *may*, not that it *must*. And another inference from the same fact, much more important, is, that where any injustice really exists, it must, from the very nature of the case, be so small in its amount, so trivial, that its existence cannot be certainly known. It must, after the loudest complaint, really remain doubtful whether there was any just ground for it. So that practically, we cannot but think that this part of the objection, to borrow

the language of the older mathematicians, is in "a vanishing state." As to the difficulty of meeting the various claims, so as to award distinctions in the precise ratio of merit, it generally cannot be done. But in a case which admits of degrees, shall we abandon the end altogether, because we cannot attain it perfectly? The same objection in full force, lies against the enactment of penal laws, and the administration of justice throughout the world; but weighed against the benefits received, notwithstanding this defect, it sinks into insignificance. So we think it must, on mature reflection, in the case before us.

4. And finally, it is said that by encouraging numbers to hope for what few can actually obtain, many must suffer a disappointment, which will operate seriously to their disadvantage in future life. To this we reply, that the honorable appointments need not be, and generally are not, very few, compared with the number of pupils. But we cannot be supposed to be answerable for the usages of each particular institution, nor for the effect of that usage on each particular individual. But to illustrate the principle of the objection, let us select a case every way favorable to the views of the objector. One of the competitors for the first honor fails in his object, supposing the honor merely to be his object. This disappointment may occasion a temporary depression of feeling, nothing more. How is he injured by the competition? Will he come less honorably, and less advantageously before the community, for having entered the lists, and shown that he was anxious to try his ability, and reluctant to fall back into the ranks of mere mediocrity without a trial? Will his increased acquisitions, his habits of vigorous study, be the less valuable, because another has surpassed him? The very failure does him infinitely more credit, than the listlessness and apathy which would have declined the contest. We can see but very small probability of any serious injury from this source. The experience of the past, we believe, lends no support to any fears which may exist on this point.

These, so far as we have been able to ascertain them, are the objections which have been most frequently, and most strongly urged against the system of college honors. With what justice they have been urged, and how far they have now been obviated, our readers must judge.

We might here dismiss the subject; but it seems appropriate to refer more particularly to the antiquity and prevalence of the practice of conferring some mark of distinction upon successful scholarship. We have already remarked that it was as old as the Father of History, and the Olympic games. It is well known, that contests in poetry and eloquence were among the objects of attraction at those national festivals; nor is it difficult to credit the assertion, that the desire of bearing off the olive-wreath, on those splendid occasions, contributed in no small degree to the unrivalled refinement and elegance of Grecian literature; a literature, which at this moment is, and for ages has been, studied, and admired, and imitated throughout the civilized world. The history of education in modern Europe bears ample testimony to the importance of literary honors, as incentives to diligence. In the English universities, to receive a degree of Bachelor of Arts, among the *οἱ πολλοὶ*, means little more, than that three years have been passed in idleness, dissipation, and mischief. It is little more than a mere nominal affair, and holds out no motive to exertion. But it is far otherwise with the *university honors*. These (we speak now more particularly of Cambridge) belong, as is probably known to the most of our readers, to three classes, denominated *Wranglers*, *Senior Optimes*, and *Junior Optimes*. On the final examination in the Senate-house, from fifteen to twenty are assigned to each of these classes, and numbered in the order of scholarship. The examinations for these honors embrace all the higher and more difficult branches of classical literature and the exact sciences; and are conducted with a severity, at which, in this country, all our college fraternities would stand aghast; the student being required, for instance, with nothing but pen, ink, and paper, to translate a passage of Shakspeare, selected at pleasure, into Greek Tragic Iambics, or to solve one of the most complicated and thorny problems of the Infinitesimal Calculus. But, in proportion to the severity of the task, is the importance and honor of success. The same general system obtains at Oxford, where we are assured, on respectable authority, that "the great spring which moves and invigorates the whole is emulation." We hazard nothing in the assertion, that without this system

of honors, or something equivalent, the English universities could never have become, nor could they long remain, what they now are, the pride and boast of England. Would that the sentence of proscription against half her sons no longer stained their annals!

In the German universities, the examinations for the lowest degree conferred, that of Doctor of Philosophy, partake of the same severity and extent, as those for honors in the English. The students collected together from all parts of Europe, and we may add, the world, are entirely free from all university discipline. They enjoy all the freedom of citizens. There is no reproof for irregularity, no censure for neglect. Under this state of things, it may well be asked, and well deserves to be considered, by what means that untiring diligence, and that thorough scholarship, which characterize the great body of the German students, are secured? Is it owing to any felicitous peculiarity in the genius of German youths? Or is it owing to the inspiring example, the stirring exhortation, and personal influence of learned professors? To neither; but to the simple fact that no student is admitted to a degree, or to any employment, hardly to teach the rudiments of classical learning in the lowest Gymnasia, without sustaining the most rigid examinations on all the branches of a university education. "The chief secret," says Professor Robinson, who evidently examined the subject with much care, "lies in the direct power of government over all places of honor and profit, in the general requisition of a university education, as a *sine quâ non* preparation for every public station; and lastly, and principally, in the fact, that no one is even then admitted into any profession, nor to hold any office whatever, without being first subjected to two, and sometimes three, severe examinations. Here is the strong hold of the government upon the students, and the main secret of the diligence and good behaviour of the latter." Degrees there operate precisely as college honors do elsewhere. With no high incentives to diligence, in the form of literary honors and degrees, awarded not as a matter of course, but only on the most ample proof of real scholarship; honors and degrees, which at once introduce the recipient to the favorable notice of the public, and open before him the most eligible

walks of life ; is it to be supposed, that those foreign universities could ever have achieved what they have done, with so much honor to themselves, and advantage to the world ? And is it to be believed, that institutions abroad, or at home, without any such incentives, may safely rely upon the student's sense of propriety, and his love of knowledge, for the full performance of those toilsome duties which devolve upon him ? The notion is utterly futile. It has no foundation in the ample history of man. Ease and enjoyment, not labor and self-denial, are congenial to his nature. Some strong incentive, something over and above a thirst for knowledge, and a sense of propriety, is absolutely necessary to summon the latent energies of his mind to action, and insure that diligence, and that vigorous concentration of effort, which lie at the foundation of all high attainments in literature and science. That necessary incentive is found, as we think, and as we have endeavoured to show, in the proper distribution of college honors and distinctions.

Such, in conclusion, are our views of the important subject which we have ventured to discuss. The principle of emulation, that is, the desire of those benefits and advantages, which naturally belong to superiority in knowledge, virtue, and abilities, is founded in nature ; it is justifiable as a rule of action, being recognised and sanctioned by revealed religion, and by the whole course of God's present moral government ; it is, for the reasons stated, highly expedient to resort to it, as an incentive to diligence in the discipline and government of colleges. We cannot therefore, but hope, that those, who are charged with the management of our literary institutions, will be slow to abolish a practice, which, based upon the most obvious dictates of reason and common sense, has in all former times done so much to elicit the powers of the youthful mind, and advance the interests of sound learning.
